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ABSTRACT

Faculty members are the most important resource for attaining high student achievement and retention rates. At the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), interviews with instructors who achieved over 90% retention for the Spring 1979 semester revealed that their courses were well-structured, used materials related to students' needs, and did not rely heavily upon lectures. Above all, these instructors took a personal interest in each student. Specific approaches which proved effective at the CCC include the following: (1) retention rates in a television English course were raised from 55% to 100% through the use of taped comments by the teacher about the students' compositions; (2) videocassette modules, used to explain economic concepts, were made available for students' use in the library; (3) two Humanities instructors used the Crowder approach (scrambled text) to programmed learning to improve class discussions; (4) several teachers used a variety of ways of providing programmed evaluation to give immediate feedback to students taking tests; and (5) many faculty members have achieved success using the Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO) system. Other notable gains in retention and achievement have been made by using mastery learning procedures, special counseling and orientation sessions during summer, special completion awards, testing and assessment, and cooperative course development. (AYC)

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by

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EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

A Position Paper
by
Hymen M. Chausow

This paper will attempt to present ways in which faculty can improve both student achievement and retention.

Effective instruction can be measured by retention and achievement results. Increasing retention by 10 per cent this coming academic year is the goal for the City Colleges of Chicago. Together with improved retention, improved achievement results can go a long way to prepare students for advanced courses and to contribute to job security for CCC faculty.

Faculty members are the most important resource for attaining high achievement and retention rates. Many are having excellent results. Many have been willing to participate in "in-service" offerings and try new methods of instruction. Moreover, courses offered through the U of I, SIU, Institute of Psychoanalysis, U of C, and through our own Staff and Faculty Development Center have been approved for lane advancement.

Some faculty members, representing various disciplines have, with our current heterogeneous student body, achieved a retention of 90+ per cent and 90+ per cent in A, B, and C grades. Don Barshis, a faculty member at Loop College and the Director of the "IN" (Individualized Needs) program for high-risk students, reports that in the Spring 1979 semester 92 per cent (of 190 students) were eligible to register for the Fall 1979 semester in good academic standing.

What have these faculty members been doing to achieve successful results? Some suggestions will be offered taking into account

many of the ideas which these faculty members have found to be effective.

Interviewing faculty members who achieved 90+ per cent retention for Spring 1979 semester, reveals that their courses are well structured, use materials related to student needs, and do not rely heavily on lectures. Above all, the instructor takes a personal interest in each student. Follow-up of students who are absent is the common practice of these faculty members with some utilizing "peer-group" contacts. Friends are identified in class and absences are brought to their attention--teacher cares. Each faculty member achieving 90+ per cent retention will be contacted and asked to relate their experiences.

Some case studies of effective instructional techniques and other possibilities follow:

Mr. Robert Powell, formerly of the Wright English faculty, was involved as a section teacher for a TV English course. His duties were to handle two sections of 25 students each. Mr. Powell was responsible for grading themes and holding telephone conference hours. The normal retention rate in the English TV course had been between 55-60 per cent. Mr. Powell achieved 100 per cent! What did he do? Instead of grading the themes by marking up the paper, Powell required students to submit a recording disc with each theme. By taping his remarks, he "discussed" the theme with the student--a very personalized experience. In a follow-up questionnaire, each student reported that this was one of the best experiences he/she ever had.

Karl Simpson, Economics faculty member at Wright and Chicago City-Wide Colleges, utilized videocassette modules to explain

economic concepts. Any student having difficulty with a concept could go to the library, select the proper tape and get additional instruction.

Lester Cook and Martin Billing, Humanities faculty members at Kennedy-King and Daley Colleges respectively, decided to utilize a form of programmed learning. Rather than using the Skinner approach (small step, straight line "no error"), they used the Crowder approach (scrambled text). They programmed Artistotle's Ethics. An example of how they did this follows: Students were required to read Book I and then answer questions. Students were asked what Aristotle meant by "good" or "goodness" and then given three statements (1,2,3). If, for example, the student answered 3, he/she was asked to turn to Page 3. There the statement was repeated and the student was told he was wrong and additional information was presented so the student could see that 3 was an inappropriate answer. The student was then directed back to the original question. Based on the additional information, the student then selects another statement--let's say 1. He/she is then directed to Page 4. Again the statement is repeated, however, this time the student is told that he/she is correct and a reinforcing paragraph is given supporting the choice of 1. Les Cook reported that his class discussions were dramatically improved by this approach.

Several faculty members have utilized "programmed evaluations" to improve achievement. Personally, I used the "Pressy Punch Board"--a device in which the student selects (punches out) an option (A-D) and if the answer is blank. he/she knows the answer is wrong, and

continues to select options until the right answer appears (a solid dot). What this did was to have students think about each question and not leave it until the right answer is achieved. Giving students the answers 24 or 48 hours later does not have the same effect. Each unit or module of the course can be tested. Students with many "punches" on a unit immediately are made aware of the need for further study. Another value of this appreach is the increased discrimination made possible. Let us assume a 50 item test. Also assume that two students each would get 35 right (usual grading method). One student really knew the material and got the right answer on his second try. He/she wound up with a total of 65 punches (50 + 15 extra punches). The second student did not understand the material on the missed items and guessed at the answers averaging three punches (some 4's and some 2's)--thus achieving a final score of 80 (50 + 30 extra punches). Like in golf, the lower the score the better. Thus, on the same test, each student got 35 out of 50 and would have received the same grade. The new method resulted in scores of 65 and 80 and differential grades.

Many TV College faculty members expanded the use of programmed evaluations by utilizing the "color tutor." This is a chemically treated answer sheet in which students dampen what they consider to be the correct answer. If the option they select turns "red" then the student is in effect told, "stop" try again. If the student selects an option that turns "green," the student immediately knows he has the correct answer and continues to the next question. A student with many "red" marks knows that he/she needs more work on that section. Students found this technique very helpful in that they knew immediately how well they were doing and did not have

to wait for mid-term or finals. Retention in those TV courses that used these "feedback" procedures had an average increase of 10 per cent.

Other faculty members developed response guides which told the students where to go to get additional information on "red" marks.

Many faculty members are now using PLATO--Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations--a computer-based instructional technique. Students can get immediate feedback and "branched" programmed learning experiences. Student reaction has been very favorable.

An increasing number of faculty are now utilizing mastery learning procedures. In a report by Rocco Caponigri on the results achieved this past year, he notes that "students who participate in and avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the mastery learning technique do master the subject: 85 per cent of those who attend regularly and participate in assigned activities get A's and B's." In comparison with control classes, mastery learning does result in better retention and achievement.

Several colleges have been utilizing special counseling and orientation sessions in the summer. Daley College reported that 92 per cent of students so counseled last summer actively pursued their courses in the fall semester. Truman College reported that not only was retention better in counseling, but other courses showed similar results in retention and achievement. All colleges are now utilizing the special summer session, some on a small experimental basis--expansion should lead to further improvements.

High school graduates desire college credit and resent

"spending a year" in college taking courses (remedial) without receiving college credit. Special assistance courses have been developed in English, mathematics, and reading for students who need help in achieving their college goals. Supportive services in the form of counseling and tutoring are necessary adjuncts to the special assistance courses. CCC resources available for supportive services are in the form of student service aides, work-study students, learning managers, and other personnel available under the ICCB Disadvantaged Student Grant program. Faculty advisement hours can also be helpful to students.

Special assignments have been given to faculty to prepare curriculum materials--PLATO, CBI, videocassettes, mastery learning, and open learning. Dr. Benjamin Bloom, of the University of Chicago, states that our faculty has developed over $300,000 worth of mastery learning materials. The materials are available to all of our faculty. The further development, sharing and exchange of learning materials will be stressed in this academic year.

The Illinois Community College Board has given local community college districts the right to give achievement awards to students--on any basis desired by the local district. This means that in addition to the approved certificates and Associate Degrees, CCC can offer additional completion awards for shorter packages. For many students two years (and many more years for the part-time student) spent in college is a long time. Student encouragement "along the way" may enhance retention of students. It is worth a try.

Several faculty members have tried or are planning curricular improvements, including a modular, variable credit course (at Daley), an interdisciplinary approach in general education (at Truman),

utilizing open labs in business and language (at Truman, Olive-Harvey, and Malcolm X), and bloc programming (at Wright). Faculty will be encouraged to experiment with these and other ideas in the coming academic year. It will be on the agenda of the Faculty-Administration Conference this Fall: "The Mission of CCC for the 80's and Effective Instruction."

A testing and assessment program is a continuing need at CCC--proper placement and credit for demonstrable attainment of educational course objectives. Both will enhance achievement and retention of our students.

Cooperative and consortium course development within CCC and among the other "big-city community colleges" should lead to improved learning experiences for students. Working together, faculty will develop and exchange learning materials designed to meet the needs of our students.

All of us can gain satisfaction if we can demonstrate that we are helping our students achieve their educational goals. Improvement cannot be mandated. The hope is that faculty who have had success can demonstrate that "it can be done."

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